

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /055 W
-----119111 281836Z /53
R 281724Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6612

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT UK
SUBJECT: TEST FOR PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS: POULSON ET AL.

1. HOUSE OF COMMONS VOTED JULY 26 ON BI-PARTISAN
SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF THREE MPS
WHO WERE IMPLICATED IN LONG-RUNNING POULSON CORRUPTION
AFFAIR. VOTE WAS PRECEDED FRIDAY, JULY 22, BY UNEXPEC-
TED RESIGNATION FROM HOUSE OF ONE OF THREE, CONSERVATIVE
MP JOHN CORDLE, AGAINST WHOM SELECT COMMITTEE HAD
PLACED THE MOST SERIOUS CHARGES.

2. TWO REMAINING MPS (CONSERVATIVE REGINALD MAUDLING
AND LABORITE ALBERT ROBERTS) WERE LESS SERIOUSLY
INDICTED BY SELECT COMMITTEE. HOWEVER BOTH WERE ALSO
SUBJECTS OF BILLS PUT FORWARD BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS
WHICH WOULD, IF ADOPTED, EITHER SUSPEND THEM FROM
PARLIAMENT WITHOUT PAY FOR SIX MONTHS OR EXPEL THEM.

3. HOUSE ENDED DILEMMA SELECT COMMITTEE HAD POSED BY
VOTING TO "TAKE NOTE OF" COMMITTEE REPORT RATHER THAN
"AGREE WITH" OR "ADOPT" THE REPORT. BOTH MAUDLING AND
OBERTS ESCAPED SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION BY LARGE MAJOR-
ITIES WHICH REFLECTED BOTH CONSERVATIVE SOLIDARITY
BEHIND MAUDLING AND GENUINE LACK OF APPETITE ON BOTH
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SIDES OF THE HOUSE FOR THE PROCEEDINGS. DISAPPOINTED
MEMBERS ON LABOR SIDE OF THE HOUSE, WHO HAD SUPPORTED
SUSPENSION AND/OR EXPULSION, LATER CLAIMED TORIES HAD
EXERCISED WHIP ON THEIR SIDE IN DEFIANCE OF AN AGREED
FREE VOTE FOR MEMBERS; SOME CONSERVATIVES WERE, HOWEVER,
UNDOUBTEDLY SWAYED BY FORTHRIGHT DEFENSE OF MAUDLING
GIVEN BY FORMER LEADER HEATH AND CHIEF CONSERVATIVE WHIP

DENIED THAT ANY WHIPPING HAD TAKEN PLACE.

4. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE VOTING ON THE VARIOUS MEASURES SHOWS A DEGREE OF PARTY VOTING. FOR EXAMPLE, THE VOTE TO "TAKE NOTE OF" THE REPORT WAS 230 FOR TO 207 AGAINST IN MAUDLING'S CASE AND 288 FOR TO 144 AGAINST IN ROBERTS' CASE. VOTES ON MOTIONS TO EXPEL OR TO SUSPEND SHOWED SIMILAR DIFFERENCES WITH VARYING MAJORITIES. INFORMATION AVAILABLE JULY 28 SUGGESTED A SMALL GROUP OF TORIES (PERHAPS ELEVEN) VOTED AGAINST MAUDLING, WHILE A HARD-CORE GROUP ON THE LABOR BENCHES VOTED TO EXPEL OR SANCTION BOTH.

5. ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE WIDESPREAD UNPOPULARITY OF THE WHOLE MATTER IS THE FACT THAT MANY MPS DIDN'T VOTE AT ALL; OF THE 635 MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE, ONLY 437 VOTED IN THE HIGHEST POLL. IN THE DEBATE ON THE VARIOUS MOTIONS, MPS WERE CRITICAL OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE, WHICH ACTED BOTH AS PROSECUTOR AND JUDGE (IN THE WORDS OF ONE MP). A YOUNGER CONSERVATIVE TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT HE FELT INAPPROPRIATE THE ROLE FORCED ON HIM OF ACTING AS A JUDGE OF A FELLOW MEMBER'S ETHICS AND PRACTICES, PARTICULARLY IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY AGREED STANDARDS. ANOTHER MP SAID THAT HIS PROBLEMS WERE CONSIDERABLY EASED BY CORDLE'S RESIGNATION; HE COULD NOT IN CONSCIENCE HAVE

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SUPPORTED MAUDLING, WHOM HE CONSIDERED INJUDICIOUS RATHER THAN CORRUPT, IF HE REMAINED LINKED ON A COMMON CHARGE WITH CORDLE, WHOM HE (THE MP) CONSIDERED BLATANTLY CORRUPT.

6. CONCLUSIONS THAT CAN BE DRAWN FROM YESTERDAY'S VOTE ARE: MPS OF ALL PARTIES ARE NOT YET FULLY COMFORTABLE WITH SELF-POLICING TECHNIQUES ADOPTED TO DATE AND SHOW CONTINUING RELUCTANCE (AS IN THE EARLIER STONEHOUSE CASE) TO TAKE DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST THEIR OWN MEMBERS IN THE ABSENCE OF JUDICIAL PROCEDURES OUTSIDE THE HOUSE; PARTY AND PERSONAL LOYALTIES REMAIN STRONGLY ENTRENCHED IN THE HOUSE WHICH, IN SOME WAYS, CONTINUES TO OPERATE AS A PRIVATE CLUB; CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN THE BROADEST SENSE IS AN EVER-PRESENT DANGER FOR MANY MPS, NOT RESTRICTED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE CONSERVATIVE BENCHES, WHO ARE ALSO ENGAGED IN BUSINESS, PROFESSIONAL, ACADEMIC OR OTHER FINANCIALLY REWARDING ACTIVITIES; EMOTIONS CAN AT TIMES RUN HIGH IN THE HOUSE; AND, FINALLY, LAST WEEKS OF PARLIAMENTS ARE APT TO BE PREOCCUPIED WITH BUSINESS AND VOTE-TAKING NOT CONNECTED DIRECTLY WITH RUNNING THE NATION'S AFFAIRS.

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